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THE VALUE OF RAPPORT IN RANGATAHI MĀORI MENTAL HEALTH: A MĀORI SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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2009
Abstract

This thesis examines the rapport building that occurs between rangatahi Māori whaiora (adolescent Māori who use mental health services) and Māori social workers in the field of community mental health. Six Māori social workers were interviewed to explore how they view and practice rapport building with rangatahi Māori whaiora. The Māori social workers were able to provide valuable perspectives based on years of personal and professional experience.

The research was conducted using a social constructionist perspective, informed and guided by Māori-centred research principles. A qualitative research method was used and both Massey University and Māori ethical considerations thoroughly explored. Face to face interviews guided by an integrated practice framework, enabled the voices of the Māori social workers to be heard, eliciting in detail where their views have come from.

The findings from the research showed that Māori social workers view rapport as essential in their practice and therefore they practice in a way that facilitates this with rangatahi. The social workers utilise their values and beliefs in their practice, according to their worldview; how they were raised; what they have experienced, and what they have learned. Specifically, Māori social workers identified the importance of practicing with a Māori worldview, therefore enabling physical connection, spiritual connection, and cultural connection with the rangatahi. These all contributed towards rapport building with the rangatahi and also their whānau.

The importance of action reflection processes were also highlighted. This is due to the balance required from Māori social workers to fulfil the needs of the rangatahi as aligned with their values and beliefs, while meeting the requirements of the organisation, profession and wider community. This thesis explores these key findings.
Acknowledgements

To the six Māori social workers who volunteered their time and provided valuable contribution to this research, thank you. This would not have been possible without your overt value of and passion for rangatahi.

I would like to thank my first supervisor, Rachael Selby, for two years of guidance towards the goal of thesis completion and for maintaining a positive and persistent approach. Thanks also to my second supervisor, Bronwyn Campbell.

Thank you to Nathan, my husband, for having so much patience in me and for nurturing me along with little whispers of ‘you can do it’. Thanks to my family who put up with my study complaints and who were all there for me even when they did not know they were. The tautoko, the manaaki, the aroha, the awhi from you all has been and continues to be amazing. I am really blessed.

I would like to thank my workplace, Oranga Hinengaro at MidCentral Health DHB. Throughout my study I continued to work full time with their support. Without this, embarking on a Master’s thesis would have felt impossible.

Throughout the course of this thesis Te Rau Puawai has provided a rock of support. Kaimahi (staff) have been on hand consistently willing to assist in any way. Rangi Mataamua was a motivating force who assisted me with the research question. Felicity Ware is a wise spirit and always available. She organised precious writing retreats and much needed resources. Guest speakers provided inspiration and encouragement.

I would also like to thank all the others who have read, edited and given advice and encouragement: Aunty Wheturangi and Jane Parsons, and last but not least my confidant and friend, Paul’e Ruwhiu. Paul’e and I started the Masters journey together, leaned on and supported each other at different times and worked hard to finish together.

Ka nui te aroha ki a koutou.
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